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Sadness and Gladness: The Films of Glasgow Corporation, 1922–1938¹

- Elizabeth Lebas

I went therefore to Glasgow, and at once put myself into communication with the leaders of the movement there; and the first thing they showed me was the plan of the city as it was when the Act was passed, and photographs of some of the buildings which they had pulled down under its provisions.

Octavia Hill (1875)²

Thus Hill, a founding member of the 'movement', the Charitable Organisation Society, reports a decisive moment of social reform through its visual representation.³ The photographs commissioned by the Glasgow City Improvement Trust in preparation for the clearance of unsanitary housing under the Glasgow Improvement Act of 1866, were most likely those taken by the Glasgow photographer Thomas Annan, and provided a preparation for



- Thomas Annan, *Old Glasgow*.

Hill's tour of the cleared districts. Annan's photographs were collected in a large bound volume, stamped with the Corporation Crest, to form an institutional record of political achievement and also one of time past; of the lives of those who had lived in the vanished but, thanks to the photographs, not forgotten neighbourhoods.⁴

However, for Hill, already a famous reformer, the photographs commissioned by the Corporation's notables were secondary to an evangelical discourse, appealing not to those whose neighbourhoods had been pulled down, but to a progressive reading bourgeois public:

The next morning I went to see what remains of these old 'wynds' and closes. I found that here and there a house, here and there whole sides of a close or alley, had been taken down to let in the brightening influence of sun and air. The haggard, wretched, population which usually huddles into dark, out-of-the-way places, was swarming over the vacant ground for years unvisited by sun and wind. Children were playing in open spaces who had never, I should think, had space to play in before, I felt as if some bright and purifying angel had laid a mighty finger on the squalid and neglected spots. Those open spaces, those gleams of sunlight, those playing children, seemed earnest of better things to come – of better days in store.⁵

Today, the power of Annan's photographs stems from their reanimation of the vanished closes and their inhabitants. What is secondary is their part in a formal political programme. These photographs in fact appear to have a discourse of their own, appealing to another and more modern, more individual, kind of empathy.

The album is arranged as a virtual journey, beginning with four photographs which look

down onto the formal façades of Trongate and the High Street. These are contrasted with a series of images taken at chest level of what lies behind them: dark and humid closes, some inhabited, some empty, each more destitute than the last, identifiable with two exceptions, only by their street numbers on the main thoroughfares. Two interspersed photographs in this series remind us that the location of the closes has shifted and that their inhabitants are part of ordinary street life ('Bell Street from the High Street' and 'Saltmarsh from Bridgegate'). The album closes with a sunlit and bustling 'Main Street, Gorbals'.

In the peopled closes, those who stand look directly into the camera. Those who sit are on the ground, often grouped together as for a school photograph. Here and there is the ghostly blur of a small child. In the empty closes, there is always a trace of human presence – a cart, a face in a window, washing hanging from poles; and always an institutional presence – street lamps, drainage pipes and grills, broken paving. There is also always a point of light, necessary but meaningful, streaming through a narrow archway from the sunlit High Street, suspended from a piece of sky above, reflected in an end window. Behind the formal façade of the High Street is another formality: that of the poor. In the image of 'Close number 65, High Street', figures turn to the camera, a goat turns its back to it, and deep within the passage a window reflects the shadow of the photographer. The lucidity and discretion of the images are equally startling.

The Glasgow City Improvement Trust commissioned another album from Annan entitled 'Old Glasgow'. It featured many of the photographs of the first album, but also included others of ancient thoroughfares and buildings, along with a fanciful photogravure of 'Trongate in Olden Times', purporting to show the district and its costumed denizens in the eighteenth century.⁶ This album seems to have had another purpose, functioning as a kind of institutional souvenir. Throughout the twentieth century the Corporation continued to commission hundreds of photographs of its city and re-building projects.

That this essay on the first period of Glasgow Corporation's cinematographic enterprise, which was to run through most of the twentieth century, begins with a discussion of photographs taken in the 1860s and 1870s is itself a preparation. It is not only to suggest that a shift would take place in the representation of social reform from a written to a visual imagery, but also to suggest that this shift indicated a change in sensibility. The viewer, as opposed to the reader, could see for him or herself a 'reality' which appeared to be more 'real', or less mediated, and which could offer at the same time a greater variety of coexistent and even contradictory meanings. Just as Annan's photographs were both documentary and promotional, and could be re-cycled from official documents to official souvenirs, while affording the individual images for private recollection and contemplation, so did Glasgow's own commissioned films function for similar purposes. There was, however, one fundamental difference. The films implied not a viewer, but a collectivity, an audience. This audience was now made up of *citizens*, assembled together as part of a political contract between themselves and the municipality they had elected to view the improvements the municipality was undertaking on their behalf. In short, the denizens of Glasgow's closes had become their citizens.

Municipal cinema was thus first and foremost a cinema of social democracy which had a multiplicity of purposes and had to appeal to the widest possible audience in order to fulfil its central political motive, namely to gain consent and consensus. After the First World War, the Corporation's commissioning of films which demonstrated to its heterogeneous citizenry the possibility of a better and more orderly life was a judicious propaganda strategy. In this 'Second City of the Empire', a unionised industrial labour force radicalised by the recent war, co-existed uneasily with extremes of wealth and a continuous flow of impoverished immigrants from Europe, Ireland and the Highlands. Political divisions intersected with religious ones; Calvinism, Catholicism, Communism and Labourism colliding in ways which could be as

destructive as they were innovative. The immediate local and political impact of the Corporation's films is difficult to assess, since these films were shown mainly to women and children, citizens in the making. The Corporation did not keep audience figures, perhaps because film showing took place on council premises and viewing was free.

Glasgow Corporation's post First World War cinematic enterprise was largely circumstantial. Firstly, it could rest on radical social policies of national reconstruction, particularly those promoting public health, public housing and public education. In showing its new schemes and activities, the authority also represented the national state and, implicitly, its authority. Following the 1921 Representation of the People Act, it also had a large audience of newly enfranchised citizens, for the first time including women. Moreover, cinemagoing was already extremely popular in Glasgow and there were both national and local films companies established in the city. However, unlike Bermondsey Borough Council in South London, which also began to make films shortly after the First World War, Glasgow's cinematographic enterprise was from the outset to be professional. As I have discussed elsewhere, Bermondsey's films were made by enthusiasts, including the Borough's Medical Officer of Health, Radiographer and Chief Administrator, while the Corporation never made its own films but commissioned them from professional filmmakers.⁷ This professionalism was eventually to engage the Corporation in a national cinema.

Given the heterogeneity of its audience, its progressive tradition and its literacy – Glaswegians had enjoyed basic public education since the late eighteenth century – what sensibilities and imageries did the Corporation's films rely on? It is beyond the scope of this essay to offer a detailed analysis of these, but a preliminary indication of some themes may be useful. Firstly there is the imagery of nineteenth-century reformism: the representation of the plight of the unfortunate to the more fortunate for the purpose of a consensual national and social project.⁸ If for the favoured classes this

involved a kind of visual tourism, for the disfavoured it involved seeing themselves in their own surroundings. Attention to truthfulness and credibility was therefore important. Equally important was the feeling of inclusion which recognisable scenes and people created: the audience could see themselves 'as others saw them' and in this sense, the films were 'local topicals', to use the early term applied to films of record. Secondly, the films continued to make visual and metaphorical use of the Victorian imagery of light, hope and redemption. However, the 'better days in store' were no longer far in the future, but being made soon, if not now. As discussed below, the imagery of light and hope suffuses almost all of these films and, as it did for Octavia Hill, crucially involves the lives of children.

Thirdly, the films showed a positive contrast between 'then' and 'now' and 'before' and 'after', achieved through a process of intervention (by the municipality) and transformation (of the community and the self). Unlike Annan's photographs, they never appealed to nostalgia or became Corporation treasures. Fourthly, the films exploited collective pride in the city: if Edinburgh was the 'Athens of the North', then Glasgow was the 'Paris of the North'. Film sequences pan over imposing public buildings, squares and gardens, busy shopping streets, train stations and dockyards. The films showed what it meant to be a Glaswegian; a citizen with his or her own territory and preoccupations, yet contributing to the common wealth and thus connected to the whole of the Empire and the world. Lastly, the films not only drew upon established photographic and film genres – the local topical, the instructional, the promotional film, the travelogue, the newsreel and the melodrama – but also upon popular Scottish and urban performative traditions, such as singing, dancing, instrument playing, storytelling and the music hall.

Using the Corporation's sparse archives (many documents were lost with the re-organisation of the Corporation into Strathclyde Regional Council in the late 1980s), official and other published material, and a selection of the films

themselves available or listed in the National Film and Television Archive and the Scottish Screen Archive, the main aim of this essay is to introduce the films sponsored by the Corporation between 1922 and 1938, and to place them in the perspective of the creating of a new urban and civic identity, a new way of being in the world – as films for modern living.⁹ The focus is on the films commissioned by the Corporation in the early 1920s, and particularly those sponsored by the Necessitous Children Holiday Camp Fund in the late 1920s and 1930s. These do not represent the whole corpus of films sponsored by the Corporation, which continued to be engaged in film projects into the 1970s, but they provide a bridge between nineteenth-century photographic practice and what came to be known, however questionably, as the ‘documentary film movement’.¹⁰

In the same ways that their predecessors had recognised new uses for photography, the Corporation’s elected members, officers and employees were keen to experiment with film, to explore its political and pedagogical uses and subsequently engage in a national debate which was to include a cultural policy for a Scottish and national popular film culture. The Corporation’s commissioned films were the outcome, not the source of its legal power and authority. They represent only a miniscule part of its undertakings. Yet, particularly during the interwar years, they contributed to the making of the Corporation’s national reputation as a modernizing agency and a model for the Left. This model was to have a deep influence on the documentary film movement as a critical project.

The first series of films to be considered, offering a kind of circumambulation around Glasgow’s new civic assets and practices, are an attempt to assert the city’s importance as a political player in the post-war national reconstruction. The second series, consisting of fund raisers and instructional entertainments, are aimed at juvenile audiences. These contributed to an emerging and nationally influential interest in the significance of cinema as an educational tool. From the early 1930s until the late 1940s the Corporation, in association with Campbell

Harper Films, a Glasgow film production company, sponsored many new films.¹¹ The Corporation also later commissioned films from the Scottish Film Council and other ‘documentary’ production companies. These formalised and emphasized instructional and pedagogical contents, while introducing more abstract concepts and also more consciously appealing to a Glaswegian and Scottish identity, thus transforming the films into identifiable cultural products in their own right. Once the Corporation decided to commission its films from Campbell Harper in the 1930s, a formula appears to have been arrived at and no further discussions are found in the Minutes about commissioning. The discussion shifts to using film as educational tool. A Scottish educational film genre had come into being which now belonged more to its makers than to the Corporation. This lies beyond the scope of the present essay.¹²

First Films: Estate Improvements

The Great War was hardly over when the Corporation commissioned three films from commercial producers, the first of over fifty that would be sponsored during the next half-century. These were *Glasgow’s Housing Problem and its Solution* (c.1917–1920), *Glasgow’s Cattle Market and Housing Programme* (1922) and *Parks Department* (1922). The first film was made by Greens Film Service, the latter two by Gaumont.¹³ They may not have been the first films sponsored or bought by the Corporation, but they were the first to be sponsored as municipal policy. The Corporation Archives in the Mitchell Library in Glasgow hold stills from a film entitled *Glasgow 1910*, showing promenaders on the Great Western Road, but these may simply have been acquired by the Corporation as mementos.¹⁴

These three films are peregrinations around prestige locales and municipal assets. This was to become an established genre which other local authority films would employ.¹⁵ It could already be found in travelogues and newsreels, but it has earlier antecedents in eighteenth-century publications of engravings and descriptions of

celebrated and stylistically innovative aristocratic country estates. In the nineteenth century this formula was adopted in photography and through publication extended to new middle-class audiences. These photographic albums were substitutes for travel, souvenirs of excursions and intelligence on the properties and life-styles of the upper classes. In this respect, Thomas Annan's commercially published album, *The Old Country Houses of the Old Glasgow Gentry* functions as a counterpoint to the album produced for the Glasgow City Improvement Trust: it provides information on how and where another class lives, but shows the attributes of power rather than of deprivation. Altogether, what was radically different in these scenes of ownership is that they showed the properties and activities of the body politic, the Corporation. There had been changes and more were to come.

In the first film, *Glasgow's Housing Problem and its Solution*, of which only the first two minutes survive, the Lord Provost, the Convenor of the Housing and General Improvement Committee and the Sub-Convenor appear to present the Corporation's new housing policy. There is a diagram of the layout of new buildings and shots of bricklayers and other tradesmen working on a building site. A caption exhorts building tradesmen to resume their former occupations in the national interest. The second film, *Glasgow's Cattle Market and Housing Market and Housing Programme*, begins with a sequence showing the town hall in George Square (also photographed by Annan) before cutting to the grand marble interior staircase of the building and then to the Council in session in the Chamber. This is followed by exterior shots of cars and other traffic, and suited men leaving and entering the building. The next sequence shows the Merklands cattle wharf, with cattle being unloaded and then in the auction ring, and finally split carcasses moving along an overhead railway into chill rooms, before the doors close behind them. Again it is a sequence peopled only by men, this time working men, dockers, drovers, auctioneers, buyers and slaughterhouse workers, whose activities are

explained as a single process taking place on various sites of municipal labour and regulation. The close depiction of the labour process of a trade would also feature in later municipal films. There was an educational element to this, but it also no doubt appealed to male members of the audience.

The final sequence focuses on what the Corporation is doing about housing. It begins with a panning shot of temporary housing, then cuts to various tenements and housing schemes in progress, and close-ups of new building techniques (pebble-dashed concrete facing, steel-framed windows) and types of housing being built, before ending with a general view, taken from a high vantage point, of houses under construction in the Mossbank district. This practice of showing types of buildings and places of a common and tacitly understood category (closes, country houses, public parks, clinics and the like) seems to have acted as the grammar of a new visual language for a new kind of knowledge of categorisation and standardisation. Except for a few passers-by and children playing among the half-built housing or posing for the camera, there are almost no people visible. These are the new, calm, clean and orderly working-class suburbs.

The last film of this group, *Parks Department*, as the opening caption explains, is a tour of the city's thirty-one parks and ninety-two recreation grounds, with open spaces and children's playgrounds making up 2739 of the city's 19,183 acres. Ballahouston Park is shown and mention is made of Lord Rowallan's gift of Roukenglen Park, former grounds of the aristocracy whose properties, including Ballahouston's mansion, had appeared in Annan's 1878 publication. There are many scenes of the city's public parks and gardens; the camera slowly panning across lavish flowerbeds to swans, rowing boats and model sailboats on the pond in Victoria Park, men and women playing golf, children on a roundabout and a bandstand concert in progress. This, we are shown, is what the Parks Department provides. There have also been acquisitions. Captions announce 'Linn Park acquired in 1919' and 'Loch

Lomond Park . . . twenty miles from Glasgow. Acquired in 1915 to secure public access to the Loch'. And mid-way through this two-reel film, with an effect like the goat that turned its back on the viewer in Annan's print, the camera briefly follows a crowd of men carrying a banner proclaiming 'Partick District Unemployed'. We are not in mythical space, but in precise historical time. Public parks and gardens and 'the other place in the country', Loch Lomond Park, will become major topics of municipal cinematography, as much repositories of new social and political aspirations as the means of promoting health and orderly leisure.

How were these films commissioned? There is documentary evidence for the two films made by Gaumont. In early August 1922 the Sub-Committee on Kelvin Hall Industries agreed to recommend that 'a cinematograph film of principal undertakings be prepared for exhibition at Kelvin Hall, and that the various departments be asked to provide facilities for filming departmental features under the guidance of the special sub-committee'.¹⁶ Kelvin Hall in Kelvingrove Park, an imposing exhibition hall and gallery under the remit of the Parks Department, had been opened after the war mainly to promote Glasgow's commercial interests and act as showcase for the Corporation's undertakings and cultural activities (Glasgow had already hosted major international exhibitions in 1888, 1901 and 1911). By 1921 Kelvin Hall was clearly a success, as the venue for a great variety of commercial and public exhibitions and competitions, including the 'Health and Housing Exhibition' in September–October 1920 to promote the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act, and it was producing surplus revenue. No evidence has been found on how these first films were financed, but the Kelvin Hall's income was possibly the initial source. By the end of August 1922, what soon became the Special Sub-Committee on Filming of Municipal Undertakings was asking the municipal Heads of Department to submit a list of views and subjects of their activities and choosing which 'would be more interesting suitable for filming'. After considering various bids from film producers, it agreed to

accept that of the Gaumont Film Company Ltd. at 77 Mitchell Street, Glasgow.¹⁷

There was no prior agreement over what to include in the proposed 5,000 foot film as department heads competed for screen time. Finally however

[a]fter an exchange of views, it was agreed that the various departments should each, at their own expense, arrange with the film producers for their respective advertising purposes the various views or subjects, etc. to be filmed, and that the Sub-Committee on Kelvin Hall should select therefore from the parts thereof to be included in their film, paying therefore the cost of production only of the parts selected.¹⁸

Making each department defray the cost of their own footage seems a judicious way of curbing the enthusiasm that had led them all to submit proposals, while allowing some independence over what to film. It may also explain why the more affluent Parks Department managed to have its own separate film. In turn, subsidy under the new 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act may have paid for footage of new housing and planning schemes. Not all departments, however, managed to get immediately or at all involved in the project, although it is likely that two more films, *Educational Authority of Glasgow Special Services* (1925) and *Nursery Classes* (1926) were part of the project.¹⁹ This omission was later to be rectified in subsequent film series made by Campbell Harper in the 1930s and 40s on the Corporation's departmental activities.

Soon film projection companies were approaching the Corporation with equipment. In November, the Corporation agreed to have the Cinephone Syndicate demonstrate to the press and other interested parties the 'uses and purposes of an invention providing cinema exhibits with voice accompaniment or what is commonly called "talking pictures"' in Parkhead Public Hall. This sales pitch does not however appear to have been successful, since there is no conclusive evidence that the Corporation's silent films had recorded voice accompaniments; and almost a year later, in October 1923, the General Finance Sub-Committee on Churches, Halls,

Clocks etc.[sic] agreed to Messrs. Chalmers Ltd. of Burnside Street supplying and installing in City Hall 'one of their new type cinematograph machines'.²⁰ Meanwhile, the Kelvin Hall Sub-Committee agreed to invite bids from photographers to take photographs of exhibitors and exhibitions, fairs and events. Five offers were received but the Minutes do not indicate which one was accepted.²¹ The Sub-Committee was also promoting popular photography, for in August 1923 it agreed to spend £100 for a photographic competition.²²

As with other large cities, cinema had come early to Glasgow. George Green and his brother showed a film on a circus ground at Christmas in 1896;²³ and in February 1897 the Glasgow branch of the Philosophical Society arranged a showing of 'photographic film' to demonstrate the movements of the knee joint.²⁴ By the First World War Glasgow had dozens of commercial cinema houses and the municipality was having to engage in complex negotiations with the film industry over the regulation of film showings and censorship.²⁵ Some proposals had also been received to show free films on council premises. In February 1918 the Corporation was approached by the Secretary of the High Commission of the Commonwealth of Australia to ask for the use of a site in the city 'for giving open-air daylight cinematographic exhibitions similar to those in Trafalgar Square, London'. The Parks Department agreed to find the most suitable place, although it is not known where this took place.²⁶ It could not have been Kelvin Hall, since in March 1920 an application to show a film, *The End of the Road*, had to be turned down because there were 'no scenic facilities in the hall for the display of pictures'.²⁷ It is difficult to know precisely when the Corporation began to show films outside the City Hall and to a wider public. In this they did not differ from all the other municipalities which showed films to their constituents. These were always free to view and always on premises belonging to the local authority or approved by them. The *conditions* of showing were as intentional as the films themselves.

This first and concerted municipal interest in film must be inscribed, however briefly, in the

context of Clydeside's powerful role in arms manufacture during the Great War, and its consequent social and political repositioning in national post-war politics. The concentration for the war effort of skilled and politically active industrial labour had led to a new consciousness of its political potential and to a housing crisis of unparalleled dimension. Glasgow's Great Rent Strike of 1915 forced the government (like other European governments in the period) to institute rent controls, which remained in force in Britain until the Thatcher Government. In the meantime, the Ministry of Munitions, under the direction of architect and planner Raymond Unwin, previously responsible for Hampstead Garden Suburb and Letchworth Garden City, began to experiment with standardised social housing through a model housing scheme for munitions workers at Greenock at the mouth of the Clyde. This and other Ministry of Munitions schemes became a basis for the housing of the working classes under the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act administered by the new Ministry of Health under Addison.²⁸ Wartime measures had prevented industrial strikes, but as the war came to a close, social and political agitation throughout the nation came to a head when, in 1919, the army was called upon to quell civilian demonstrators in George's Square. The extension of suffrage to include women in 1918 ushered Britain into a new stage of civil society and Glasgow Corporation marked the Representation of the People Act by planting a tree in Kelvingrove Park.

Although there is no conclusive evidence linking John Wheatley, Minister of Health under the first Labour Government in 1924, with the Corporation's commissioning of films from Gaumont, it seems likely that he played some part. From 1912 when he was first elected to represent the 37th Ward until 1923 when he became a member of Parliament, Wheatley was very closely involved in Corporation politics. Baillie of the Burgh between 1917 and 1920, he was involved in negotiating with film companies over the Celluloid Bill in 1915, and from 1919 onwards he served on the powerful Executive Committee on Housing and on the Special

- The Films of Glasgow Corporation, 1922–1938

Committee on Housing and General Town Improvement as well as on the Advertising Committee of the Housing and Health Exhibition Committee. Glasgow's wartime prominence in housing struggles and experiments gave these latter committees particular national significance after the war, and the Health and Housing Exhibition held in Kelvingrove Hall between 17 September and 4 October 1919 may well have provided the impetus to commission films.

As early as January 1919, before the passage of the Housing and Town Planning Act, the Lord Provost announced that a gift of some £6,000 had been received from 'A Citizen' towards the proposed Housing Competition and Exhibition, additional to a grant proposed by the Local Government Board, forerunner of the Ministry of Housing. It was agreed that £4,300

be allocated for the best plans, models, illustrations, descriptions of layouts and sites, including open spaces and children's playgrounds at regular intervals in a long line of tenements in crowded streets [and the balance spent on] contour relief models of the whole City of Glasgow with sectional contour relief models, large scale coloured maps prepared from Ordnance Survey Maps and aerial photographs of the city with buildings therein as they are at present and particularly of the congested and slum areas.²⁹

Furthermore, these aerial photographs, obtained from balloons flown above the city, should be used as permanent records of the present position of housing and town planning, and be exhibited to the public along with all the competitive exhibits, models, and drawings. The organisation of the competition was to be entrusted to the Housing and General Town Improvement Committee. In the following July the News Department of the Foreign Office requested that the Corporation provide 'for the purpose of British propaganda in foreign countries' photographs illustrating architectural features of Glasgow showing general views of buildings and interesting scenes.³⁰ From this, it becomes clear that the Corporation perceived itself and was perceived by the national authorities as being at the forefront of the most

important national social project of the era; and it is in this sense that the films first commissioned by the Corporation, a kind of 'view from below' to complement the aerial and abstracted 'view from above' of the city can be envisaged as a promotional political exercise addressed as much to the entire nation as to itself.³¹

Sadness and Gladness: The Films of the Necessitous Children Holiday Camp Fund

After this first initiative, the Corporation was not involved in film sponsorship until the late 1920s and then in a quite different way. It discovered a new viewing constituency: a discovery which was eventually to make the Corporation's Education department nationally prominent in the promotion of cinema in schools. Children were this new constituency, although Glaswegian children had long been ardent filmgoers. It was this very ardour which the Corporation's Education Department decided not only to regulate and monitor, as it was its statutory duty, but also to encourage.

In London, Bermondsey Borough Council's public health films were already addressing its young citizens. An Independent Labour Party stronghold which, like Glasgow, had a tradition of dock work and militancy, Bermondsey was in effect politically managed by Dr. Alfred Salter and his wife Ada, the first Labour Mayor in Britain and chair of the borough's Beautification Department. Dr. Salter went on to be Member of Parliament for Southwark and Chair of the Socialist Health Committee, which laid down the foundations for the post-war National Health Service, while Mrs. Salter became Chair of the London County Council's Parks Department. Between the wars the Salters established in Bermondsey a comprehensive social welfare system promoted by the Council's companionate mottoes: 'Prevention is Better than Cure' and 'Fresh Air and Fun'. This was an approach to the promotion of modern living which rested on responsible playfulness and was almost entirely child-centred. The playfulness was reflected in approximately forty amateur films made by

employees of the Public Health Department, including such gems as *Where There's Life, There's Soap* (1936), which were shown to the accompaniment of spoken lectures and much audience participation and singing in schools, playgrounds and in the streets. The Borough fitted out a succession of cinema vans for this purpose. But if in Bermondsey the emphasis was on personal responsibility for one's own health and body, in Glasgow the approach to children through professionally made films was more formally pedagogic, with the initial focus being on giving, receiving and sharing as a social responsibility.

The question of showing films to children in school was being broached at national level. It can be seen in the context of post-war economic restructuring and the 1919 Education Act which raised the school leaving age to 15; and also in terms of a film industry well aware of the market potential for educational films. In June 1919 Glasgow Corporation received a letter from the Scottish Education Department enclosing an extract from a Ministry of Labour inquiry, asking whether the Glasgow Juvenile Advisory Service Committee had considered if 'the use of cinematograph films in giving boys and girls knowledge of industries available for future employment would be much value'. The Scottish Education Department had itself recommended that this issue was best dealt with in schools during the later years of schooling. The Corporation's Education Authority was already considering these proposals, after receiving another letter, from a Dr. C.H. Charles of Seymour Place, London, 'intimating that the Cinematograph Co. had entrusted him with establishing a Cinematographic Service for schools and asking for the criticism of the Board on a preliminary Catalogue of Films in course of preparation'.³² The letters were referred to the Committee on Teachers and Training and in November 1920 the Sub-Committee on Cinematograph in Schools reported 'possible developments in cinematograph apparatus and the production of films suitable for schools'. In the meantime it recommended that lantern slides be used to the fullest extent'.³³ Lantern slides

continued to be used in schools throughout the inter-war period, no doubt in part because in 1925 the Education Authority bought 5,000 slides at a good price from a retiring headmaster.

Nonetheless the pressure to show films in school was also coming from another direction. In July 1920 the Advisory Committee for Juvenile Employment wrote to the Educational Authority informing it that they had an officer engaged in 'special work' whose duty it was to visit picture houses in connection with performances for juveniles and who wished to meet the Authority. The following September the Advisory Committee sent another, more urgent letter, to the Authority formally requesting that it consider conditions under which children attended cinema performances and allow its officer to visit Picture Houses in the same capacity he visits theatres in connection with juveniles appearing in licensed places of entertainment'.³⁴ The Authority's response to this complex problem, which involved more than non-attendance at school and included the issue of children working in picture houses and the contents of the films they saw, was to refer the letters to the Committee on School Attendance – and to reconstitute the Advisory Committee for Juveniles, with Charles Cleland KBE, as Chair.

Throughout the rest of the 1920s there are no further references to this issue in the Corporation Minutes, nor is there direct evidence of the projection of films in schools or of the Corporation commissioning new films, except the films promoted by Cleland. It was Cleland who would not only promote the extraordinary films of the Necessitous Children Holiday Camp Fund (NCHCF), but also in the 1930s encourage an educational film culture in the Corporation, in Scotland and indeed nationally.

Cleland was a senior political figure in the Council, serving as Baillie of the Burgh between 1896 and 1901, appointed Senior Magistrate in 1906 and then becoming convenor of the Education Authority between 1919 and 1928. He represented various wards of the city between 1891 and 1934, when he retired to pursue his interest in educational and cultural films.³⁵ In

1929, a year after the first NCHCF film was made, he participated in a conference held by the British Institute of Adult Education which resulted in the Commission on Educational and Cultural Film on which he sat. Its report *The Film in National Life*, published in 1932, became the basis for the foundation of the British Film Institute (BFI) in 1936. That year, Cleland succeeded the Duke of Sutherland as chairman, a position he kept until 1938. The following year the BFI made its first grant of £400 to the Scottish Film Council. As Ivan Butler has related, from its establishment until the late 1940s, the BFI's focus was essentially on films in schools and promoting film societies, policies which Cleland first pursued in his Glaswegian context.³⁶ Cleland died in 1941.

Although Cleland's involvement in film and radio dates from the early 1920s, his motivation to have films made for and about children seems to have derived as much from pressing necessity as from an *a priori* love of these media.³⁷ The Authority's Annual report for 1924–1925 indicated that of the 52,506 Glaswegian school children receiving their annual medical examinations, some 29,947 were assessed as having defects. These included children with insufficient clothing and footwear, being underweight and verminous and suffering from other conditions related to child poverty such as rickets and tuberculosis. The Report estimated that some 30,889 children on the Authority's school rolls were in need of food, boots or clothing. When the Education Authority came under the control of the Corporation in 1919, part of its remit was to ensure that the poorest children were sufficiently fed so to attend school. By 1924 it was providing free meals on a vast scale.³⁸

Post-war labour struggles and economic depression placed heavy financial and ethical pressure on the Authority. In November 1920 its Necessitous Children Committee (on which Cleland sat), had to consider whether children whose parents were on strike could be refused relief. It decided that children could not be refused relief but a register of children whose parents were on strike would be kept in order to consider eventual parental re-imburement,

although the matter was dropped. Then there was the issue of the quality and quantity of food given to the children – later a big selling point in enticing children to go to summer camp (camp cooks, large bowls of porridge and scenes of food being served up and children eating together are staple images of the NCHCF films). A proposal was made to replace butter with margarine, but the Committee refused to entertain it. Finally, there was the problem of feeding children over the holidays, when they were not at school. At Christmas, in the same family, some children had meals delivered at home and others didn't. The matter was partly resolved by feeding expectant mothers and children under five and opening feeding centres during the winter holidays (but not at Christmas or New Year). The most pressing problem however was keeping school and hostel feeding centres opened during the long summer holiday. In February 1924 a motion was moved by the Convenor, Reverend David McQueen, and unanimously adopted by the Committee. This was to create a school holiday fund by voluntary contribution 'especially for necessitous scholars and insofar as such scholars are not provided by statute'.³⁹

Having found a solution, the challenge was how to realise it. Although the problem of feeding children during the summer holidays seems to have been the immediate rationale for the idea of holiday camps, behind this lay the belief that every Glaswegian child should be *entitled* to a summer holiday. The Educational Authority's Annual Report for the 1924–1925 Session Year ending 31 July explained as follows:

In the early spring of this year, it was brought to the notice of the Authority that the family circumstances of so many as almost 26,000 children were such as to preclude the possibility of their enjoying a holiday at the seaside or in the country during the summer vacation. It appeared to the Authority that this was a matter in which they were directly interested, and, although it did not fall within the scope of their statutory powers and duties, they resolved to inaugurate a scheme whereby as many as possible of such children might receive this benefit.

By the end of June 1925, 21 holiday camps had been established in Dumfriesshire, Linlithgowshire, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire in schools closed for the summer vacation. In West Kilbride General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston lent his grounds to ‘put a considerable number of boys under canvas’ (the General is probably the distinguished-looking gentleman in plus fours who occasionally appears in some of the films). There were two camps for Roman Catholic children, a camp for Jewish children and camps for children with special needs – including a much-filmed camp for blind children. For the youngest, ‘four of Glasgow’s own excellent equipped schools were utilised’. In addition, the Corporation made available its parks for picnics.

The camps were staffed by Corporation volunteers, mainly teachers and members of the administrative staff. In July 1926 some 4,300 children were sent away to camp and by 1928 the Corporation was sending almost 6,000 children every year until the last of the Holiday Fund’s camps in 1938. Because of the impending war the Corporation decided not to allow holiday camps in 1939. Meanwhile holiday camps for *all* school children were soon to become a statutory provision in Scotland. In 1937 the Corporation had begun to receive funding for holiday camps under Section 8 of the Education of Scotland Act, 1936, and more funding would come under the Depressed Areas Act in 1938. But the Corporation had led the way and the Fund’s camps offered a moment of release for thousands of Glaswegian scholars and hundreds of Corporation employees.⁴⁰ There was no shortage of volunteers, although there were intimations that teachers and staff, who worked for free, were pressured into volunteering.⁴¹

The Corporation’s role in the holiday scheme was somewhat ambiguous. The Education Authority did not manage the camps.⁴² The Committee on Holiday Camps for Necessitous Children, which did, was described as an ‘unofficial agency’ – while at the same time Authority members, along with teachers and members of voluntary organisations were *ex-officio* members of the Committee. The Corporation administered the

scheme, including the feeding of necessitous children, and persuaded ten county educational agencies to contribute free premises, but the rest had to be found by voluntary contribution. There had to be fund raising – but this gave the enterprise greater freedom and an almost evangelical appeal.

In March 1926 the Committee was orchestrating a May campaign to raise money. There was to be a Necessitous Children Holiday Camp Week, for which press publicity would go out on 22 May in all the Glasgow papers and a ‘Shilling Fund’ would be established. Special sermons in churches of all denominations would be held on Social Service Sunday on 30 May, followed by an evening radio broadcast. There would be posters in trams and buses; businesses and the Chamber of Commerce would be approached. A number of headmistresses had already volunteered to organise collections in theatres, music halls and cinemas.⁴³ Soon, the biggest single category of fundraisers was Glaswegian children themselves and their parents, entertained by the Education Authority’s NCHCF film shows.⁴⁴

In January 1927 Corporation Minutes reported that Cleland, the Convenor of the Committee on Holiday Camps announced in response to ‘. . . numerous enquiries for pictorial incidents connected with the Children’s Camps a cinema film had been prepared for general information’. The Committee wanted as many children as possible, along with their parents, to see this film and encouraged schools to take advantage



• An angel arrives in *Tam Trauchle’s Troubles* (1934).

- The Films of Glasgow Corporation, 1922–1938

wherever possible of this opportunity to include the screening of other films of an educational nature.⁴⁵ No trace has been found of the name of the production company responsible for the first of the 14 films made for the NCHCF between 1926 and 1938. Neither has any information emerged on any of the films' financing, although three films are known to have been commissioned from Pathé (*Tam Trauchle's Troubles*, 1934; *Songs of Happiness*, 1934; and *The Goal*, 1935); one from Bioscope, directed by Ronald Jay (*Sunny Days*, 1931), one from Russell Harper (*Sam the Assassin*, 1937) and the last from Strand, directed by Donald Taylor, (*Give the Kids a Break*, 1938). The earlier films are mute, although they appear to have been shown with sound accompaniment. After 1934 sound was introduced for the films with storylines.

It seems likely that Cleland financed the first film and the rest were funded partly by the money raised from their showing and partly by business contributions – the music publishers Boosey and Chappell, for example, waived recording fees. In any event, as the Corporation Minutes make clear, NCHCF films were part of a complex political and educational agenda, one that could be envisaged in terms of the constitution of a new educational subject: civics. In 1948 and 1949 the Education Authority would commission 12 films from the Campbell Harper and Thames and Clyde production companies. Campbell Harper had already made eight known films for the Corporation in the 1930s. These films, with titles such as *How Our City is Governed*, *Our Public Parks*, *Keeping our City Clean* and *Glasgow Today and Tomorrow* (all 1949), in many respects revisited the images offered by the first series of films and their photographic precursors. They came under the rubric of the *Glasgow Civic Series* and were part of an educational package for the city's junior schools which included complementary film strips, wall-charts and a text book entitled *Glasgow Our City*.

The most obvious aim of the NCHCF films was to raise funds for the camps. This involved personal and collective self-made publicity. In



• A word from the sponsor: Charles Cleland in *Tam Trauchle's Troubles*.

Tam Trauchle's Troubles (1934), a caption follows the credits – 'Aims and Objects of the Necessitous Children's Holiday Camp Fund' – and Cleland himself appears on screen to introduce the film. He also introduces *The Goal* (1935), which opens with a sequence of the Scotland v England International at Hampden Park and includes a communal portrait of Glaswegian working men in close-up (a kind of *sortie de joute*) as they leave the game. R.M. Allardyce, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Education Authority, closes the film with an appeal. Cleland also appears in *Hyndland Secondary Schools* and *Sunny Days*, a film he premiered at the New Savoy Picture House in March 1931.⁴⁶ The Reverend David McQueen, Convenor of the Committee and Joseph Allen, the Director of Education, appear in *Sadness and Gladness* (1928) whose closing frames have Allen's daughter Doris performing a fairy dance.⁴⁷ All the films involve a hierarchy of shots of 'key players', ranging from sea captains (*Hearty Thanks*, 1930, is dedicated to a Captain Taylor of the 'Letitia'), to estate workers, superintendents, cooks and teachers, many of whom would have been known individually to the viewers seeing them on film a few months before the camps started again. The best form of appeal was to include everyone involved and as many children as possible – because everyone, it seems, wanted to appear in the films. In fact, most of the films are compilations of images, used many times over, of children at play – singing, dancing, swimming, tumbling and exercising in the open

air in a choreography of organised fun. All turn radiant faces to the camera. All belong. Better days had indeed come.

However, the films were not only fundraisers. They had to persuade Glaswegians to part with more than their money: they had to persuade them to part with their children over the holidays and this meant coming into contact with the authorities. In turn, children themselves had to be persuaded to leave their families and familiar surroundings for the camps and they too had to come into contact with the authorities. This was done by means of films with a story line, following in a tradition that can be traced back at least as far as films advertising the North American Fresh Air Fund.⁴⁸ Although three story films are currently too fragile to view (*The Humbug*, 1929, showing an old man converted to sending money to the NCHCF; *Jeannie Wilson*, 1933, and *Sam the Assassin*, 1937), three other narratives are available for viewing: *Sadness and Gladness* (1928), *Tam Trauchle's Troubles* (1934) and *The Goal* (1935). These films share a number of features: they tell a story from a child's point of view; they affirm a child's entitlement to a holiday; they remind viewers in various ways that an application must first be made to go to camp; they show how sending children to camp can be beneficial to both children and their carers; they show camp life, including the supervision of eating, playing and sleeping and children enjoying themselves. Finally, the films reassure their viewers that their friends will be at camp and that they can make new ones too. The contrast between the city (images of closes, streets and waste ground) and the camps (images of seaside, fields and mountains) are those of want and plenty, darkness and light. The vital message is that camp is transformative; children return home to better days in store.

The title card of *Sadness and Gladness*, a 13 minute silent film made in 1928, proclaims: 'If you keep your face to the sunshine then the shadows behind you will fall'. It tells the story of two sisters, Jeannie and Mattie, who live with their loving parents in a tenement and dream of a holiday at camp. The film opens with the caption, 'Sadness'. Their father is unemployed.



• Sisters writing home in *Sadness and Gladness*.

After a sparse supper they are put to bed. The next morning a letter arrives from the council announcing that they both have a place at summer camp and preparations are begun, with the girls' belongings neatly parcelled up in brown paper by their mother. The girls are put on a bus crammed full of joyous children and a second caption announces: 'Leaving gloom behind. Entering sunshine ahead'. Joyous scenes of camp life and plentiful meals follow. The girls sit close together and write a postcard to their mother (cards and stamps were supplied free to the children). The final caption, 'Returning to Happiness', is followed by a scene of the children's return home with a pipe band welcoming them back to the city and to parents waiting outside the Education Authority offices. At home the girls learn the happy news that their father meanwhile has found a job. He is shown writing a grateful letter to the Education Authority. The film closes with the dreamlike fairy dance of a more privileged child.

Tam Trauchle's Troubles, a sound film, begins with an address from Cleland, followed by the street leading to Tam Trauchle's tenement, which could be straight out of Annan's album for Glasgow City's Improvement Trust. At home (the set is the same as that used in *Sadness and Gladness*), the father Tam is washing up while his two boys, Sam and Robert, are larking about. Tam serves up a lone kipper. The boys have had enough. They dream of a holiday at Tantallon Castle camp. There's a first knock at the door – the rent collector – followed by another knock, conveying a sense of the uncertainties of poverty,

- The Films of Glasgow Corporation, 1922–1938



- The street life of Gorbals children.

with every caller a potential threat. This time it's the 'lady from the council': an angel has come to announce that the boys have places at Tantallon! Scenes of cheery camp fellowship follow, while back at home, Tam, apparently a lone parent, puts his feet up. The film returns to scenes of another camp, Cockenzie Camp for the Blind, which appears in several films. A long sequence follows featuring the camp's inmates and their activities. The sequence closes with a young school celebrity, John Sutherland, singing in its entirety the blind boys' goodnight song, 'Wee Willie Winkie'.

The next scene explains why Tam Trauchle has been alone with his children. His wife is in hospital. The boys, having returned from camp, visit her – providing an opportunity for the Corporation to show an immaculate and modern hospital ward, an effective advertisement of its other undertakings. The film shows further scenes of camp life and activities: Port Edgar girls' camp; children getting on and off steamers at various piers, or sailing against majestic Highland scenery – surroundings completely different from those at home in the city. A voice-over announces, 'In the "Good Old Summer Time" many young campers have the "Road to the Isles" opened up to them by the Fund'. In the final scene at the Trauchles' home there is a last knock at the door: Mrs. Trauchle is home again and the family is reunited. Once again, as in *Sadness and Gladness*, the return from camp is linked with a reinforcement of family life. The film ends with images of crowds of children playing overlaid with a printed poem.

The successful formula of *Tam Trauchle's Troubles* is repeated in *The Goal*, another sound film which opens with scenes of the street life of Gorbals children reminiscent of the later documentary images of Wolfgang Suschitzky and Paul Rotha (in Rotha's *The Child in the City*, 1947). An impromptu re-enactment of the Scotland v England football international is in progress. Juvenile spectators cheer from tenement balconies and a diminutive but imperious referee sporting an eye-patch and a flat cap lords over the game. Children in the films are sometime lame or have shaven heads, due to rickets and lice, but the shaven heads also give the boys a stylish air, often sporting, as does Robert Trauchle, a closely shaven head with just a quiff of hair at the front. Their resemblance to the cheeky characters of the comics of the day could not have been coincidental. The game ends abruptly when a policeman appears, nabs two of the boys and takes them home to their guardians, who are their grandparents. At home (the same set as before) the kind and understanding policeman suggests a camp holiday for the two boys, Geordie and Bob. Once the forms have been obtained and the applications accepted, the boys get ready to go to camp, with their bodies bathed and clothes washed and mended. Somewhat implausibly, the policeman reappears with a football and boxing gloves and a Corporation car. He is taking the boys off to camp and their grandparents on a tour of the camps. This is an opportunity for more happy scenes of camp life and yet another



- The recurrent NCHCF image of camp life.

visit to Cockenzie Camp for the Blind where this time the 'Cleland Dance Band' entertains the grandparents. Back home, the children retell their adventures and how they miss the sound of the sea. Grandmother embraces her grandson Bob. The film closes with Cleland making an appeal to the camera and the address from which to obtain forms appears on the screen.

With *Give the Kids a Break*, a sound film directed by Donald Taylor with John Grierson credited as assistant, the NCHCF films give way to the documentary genre.⁴⁹ As the credits roll, there is the sound of children singing and the opening shots are those of a classroom of boys with a young male teacher, who asks what kind of holiday they would like to have. The boys have been raising money for the camp fund. A voice-over supplies the viewer with statistics: 'thirty-five thousand children need food and sunshine and six thousand are sent on holiday'. Next the NCHCF Committee is seen in session and more information is given: 'almost 7,000 are sent at 126 shillings a week, 650 teachers and volunteers are needed'. An intertitle announces 'Early Morning' and the camera pans over a huge field of serried rows of tents, which could be a military encampment. The voice-over announces: 'Every camp must be organised; a routine must be followed'. The film has only one intimate sequence. Boys sit cross-legged outside a tent while a little boy tells them about his daddy in Canada. There is a premonition of war and maybe for Grierson, his own imminent move to Canada. This is a new kind of film: didactic, serious, masculine; conscious of itself: NCHCF films had joined mainstream 1930s documentary cinema.

By 1936 holiday camps were being integrated into a array of statutory provisions, so that *Give the Kids a Break* can be envisaged as the Corporation promoting itself politically, more to a national audience than to its own juvenile philanthropist-citizens. Once the Corporation no longer needed the latter's money, it ceased to make films which could appeal to them emotionally. In *Give the Kids a Break*, children become a vehicle for national policy, not beings with sadness, naughtiness and hopes struggling

to make sense of their vulnerable lives: a condition appealing to all children. Moreover, once the Corporation had begun to commission films from Campbell Harper, NCHCF films would be shown with other, more overtly pedagogical films, which the film industry was keen to supply.

The films of the NCHCF were shown extensively and free of charge at many Glaswegian venues. The *Glasgow Herald* reported on 9 March 1931 that Cleland had presented *Sunny Days*, 'fitted with sound effect' at the New Savoy Picture Theatre on the previous Saturday afternoon. An NCHCF film seems to have been premiered as a free show at a big commercial cinema every Spring to launch fund raising for the coming summer's camps. Cleland and members of the Educational Authority were always in attendance. As *The Evening News* reported on 24 December 1934, the showing of NCHCF films was part of the Education Authority's 'Christmas treat'. That week, 40,000 'poor Glasgow youngsters' had seen the film shows in the city's halls and schools.

By 1934, when synchronised sound had become generally available, educational and informational 'talkies' – films about Mount Everest (the 1933 Ruttledge Expedition), the bean ('a musical film') and sound waves, amongst many others, were being shown in Glaswegian non-commercial cultural venues as diverse as the Cameronian Regimental Memorial Club and the Jewish Institute.⁵⁰ An enterprising film distribution company which billed itself as the 'sole Scottish road show agents' and sole



• Children with shaven heads due to lice.

agents for the Western Electric Sound System, was in fact cornering the Scottish educational film market, supplying complete educational shows for schools, including apparatus, operators, and film screens. Jays Film Service of Glasgow had its own educational representative and an effective schools marketing strategy, providing free demonstrations to large audiences of teachers. The *Scottish Educational Journal* of 19 October 1934 reported that Jays had screened a number of films, including *Europe Today* and *Aniakchak* (an epic of Alaskan travel) to the Scottish Educational Cinema Society (later the Scottish Educational Film Association) to a large audience of teachers. Shortly after, Jays films ‘adapted to educational purposes’ were being shown in schools. The first school cinema in Scotland had already been inaugurated by Cleland in 1931. Funded by bazaars and concerts in conjunction with NCHCF fundraising film shows, it occupied a spare room in Gorbals School and consisted of a permanent screen, a sound projector and eighty collapsible chairs.

This marked the beginning of an active and innovative educational policy for the use of audio-visual aids, although it was not until 1964 that every school in Glasgow had its own dedicated projection room, in fulfilment of post Second World War policy.⁵¹ In 1933 the Corporation’s Special Subcommittee on Visual Education in the Classroom published a report entitled *The Film in the Classroom*.⁵² The report, signed by Cleland and R.M. Allardyce, Director of Education, acknowledged the contribution of the Scottish Educational Cinema Society, ‘most of whose members are in the Glasgow service’. Referring to studies in the use of films in the classroom made elsewhere,⁵³ the report claimed that these examined films for classroom use only in terms of their use as background or as films of general interest, whereas the Authority’s own experiments, involving five schools and a number of geography films had been a controlled one involving retention tests. It is not the purpose here to assess the methodology of the experiment, which came to the predictable conclusion that films were best used when accompanied by a lesson, but to speculate on

whether the report confirmed Cleland’s authority as a founding member of the British Film Institute, which the Corporation joined the following year. Appendix D of the report is perhaps more significant. It lists films shown in adult continuation classes, among which were *Shipbuilding* ‘its various processes’ and *Metropolis*, described as ‘a vision of the Future with the development of machines and the production of robots’ – indicating a conception of cinema considerably broader than the merely instrumental.

Conclusion

In 1911 the Annan studio published a souvenir album of the Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry, held to endow a chair in Scottish history. It shows a photograph entitled ‘Old Scottish Street Looking North’.⁵⁴ This could be a scene from the album perused by Octavia Hill except that it is inhabited by elegantly attired promenaders and is a reconstruction. Could it be that this is a photograph of a past which has yet to happen, that the films commissioned between the wars by the Corporation are of a present about to happen and that the films shown to its adult continuation classes are about a present and a future about to become past? After the Second World War, when Glasgow’s industrial power was in inexorable decline, the Corporation commissioned films which had lost their gladness and clung to a recent, more hopeful past in an attempt to address the better times which were dissolving away.

This essay has attempted to show that films commissioned by a large British municipality between the wars have a significance greater than the neutral and self-referential categories of ‘films of persuasion’ or ‘educational films’ – the terms used by Rachael Low.⁵⁵ These films were political and it is their very political content which is problematic for another kind of discussion of inter-war European cinema. Namely, a discussion about the ‘real’ of British documentary cinema, a cinema which follows and to an extent arises from these first films and

relies on interwar anti-fascist analyses of the role of cinema in an industrial capitalist world. Such a discussion, however essential, cannot be effectively embarked upon in these concluding lines. The perspective employed here is instead to indicate its antecedents in the 19th century imagery of social reform; an imagery loaded with affect and the imaginary of a hopeful present. Over time the conditions of this hopeful present were to change. Had Octavia Hill taken the train to Glasgow fifty years later, she would have encountered dreadful living conditions similar to those of 1875, but their management and their telling, redefined by suffrage, public revenue and a professional bureaucracy would have almost, though not quite, changed beyond recognition. What this essay has tried to show is that these early municipal films entailed a radical gesture which documentary films had more difficulty in accomplishing. This was to show to the poor themselves a life of collective decency which was attainable, accountable, and above all, local. A life to be lived.

These early municipal films can be envisaged as a counterpoint to a commercial cinema of fantasy and false consciousness, as they are actually letters of entitlement to a better, or at least healthier and better informed everyday life: an entitlement prerequisite for a true consciousness. Certainly those who commissioned and showed them believed in the power of film to promote this aim. It is thus no coincidence that the Film Society of Glasgow, founded in 1929 and proudly proclaiming itself the oldest film society in the Commonwealth, was the first to show Soviet films in Britain and had Corporation teachers and employees amongst its members.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank for their encouragement and advice Janet McBain and her colleagues at the Scottish Screen Archive, and also Ian Christie and Felicity Edholm.
- 2 'Why the Artisans' Dwellings Bill was Wanted', in Octavia Hill, *Homes of the London Poor* (Macmillan, 1883), p. 82.
- 3 For an account of its origins, including Leeds' own

photographic project of reform, see John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Macmillan, 1988).

- 4 Glasgow Improvement Act 1866. Photographs of Streets, Closes, etc. Taken 1868–1871. Consulted at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada. PH1980.0358:001–031
- 5 Hill, *Homes of the London Poor*, p. 83.
- 6 This sketch, made in 1774 by James Brown, a Glasgow Merchant, also appears in a publication of Thomas Annan, *The Old Country Houses of the Old Glasgow Gentry. One Hundred Photographs by Annan of Well-Known Places in the Neighbourhood of Glasgow with Descriptive Notices of Houses and Families. Illustrated with Permanent Photographs by Annan* (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1878). The text describes Trongate as being the 'Ile de la Cité of a city greater than that of the Paris of Mirabeau and Danton' (265).
- 7 Elizabeth Lebas, "'When Every Street Became a Cinema": The Film Work of Bermondsey Borough Council's Public Health Department', *History Workshop Journal*, 39 (1995), 42–66.
- 8 This consensus can be said to have ended with the advent of the Conservative Government led by Margaret Thatcher in 1979.
- 9 During the interwar period, many local authorities and national governments throughout Europe, notably in Italy, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, made 'films for modern living' which promoted new and modern regimes and cultures of everyday life. Their investigation is part of an ongoing project with Dr. Leonardo Ciaci of the Department of History at the University of Venice.
- 10 On continuing debates around this movement, see for instance, the introduction to Ian Aitken, ed., *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology*, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp. 29–52.
- 11 Scottish Screen Archives, *Alan Harper – Campbell Harper Films 1903–1974*, nd, File 4/10/79.
- 12 The Corporation's reputation as film sponsor and the prominence of its social policies along with growing interests in social film making can be gauged by an application received in 1936 from the Glasgow School of Art for permission to produce a film to illustrate the work of a school clinic and children's hospital. The Corporation did not grant permission. See Corporation Minutes, Clinical Sub-Committee, Item 3, 8 April 1936, p. 1357.
- 13 Greens Film Service was established by George Green and his brother in 1898, initially to buy films and arrange programmes (it commissioned films from Michael and Kenyon among others), then to operate cinemas. By 1915 it had 15 cinemas in Glasgow and in 1917 the Greens began to make their own films, including the first Scottish newsreel show, *The Scottish Moving Picture News*. By 1927 Greens Films Service had 24 cinemas and was the largest film distributor in Scotland. See Joan Allan,

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- Greens Research File, n.d., Scottish Screen Archives.
- 14 Glasgow Corporation Archives, ref: P1989/1–11. The stills are likely to come from a film entitled *The Great Western Road*, 1915, made by James Hart for the Salon Cinema, Byres Road, which is held in the Scottish Screen Archive (Communication with Janet McBain).
 - 15 See Elizabeth Lebas, 'The Clinic, the Street and the Garden: Municipal Film-making in Britain Between the Wars', in Myrto Konstantarakos, ed., *Spaces in European Cinema* (Intellect, 1999), pp. 138–151.
 - 16 Glasgow Corporation Minutes, 7 August 1922, General Finance Sub-Committee on Kelvin Hall of Industries, Item H: 2205.
 - 17 Glasgow Corporation Minutes, 28th August, 1922, General Finance Committee, Special Sub-Committee on Filming of Municipal Undertakings, p. 183.
 - 18 *Op.cit.* 31 August 1922, p. 183.
 - 19 Education Authority of Glasgow Special Services, 1925, 820 feet, and Nursery Classes, 1926, 510 feet.
 - 20 Glasgow Corporation Minutes, 24 October 1923, General Finance Sub-Committee on Churches, Halls, Clocks, etc. Item F: 2606.
 - 21 Glasgow Corporation Minutes, 19 September 1922, Special Sub-Committee on Finance, p. 192.
 - 22 Corporation Minutes, 2 August 1923, General Finance Sub-Committee on Kelvin Hall Industries, p. 2058.
 - 23 Joan Allan, Greens File.
 - 24 Reported in *The Lancet*, 27 March 1897.
 - 25 Peter Bruce, *100 Years of Glasgow's Amazing Cinemas* (Polygon, 1996). For example, the passage of the Celluloid Bill, 1915 through Parliament was the subject of much lobbying of the Corporation on the part of the Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers Ltd. and the Incorporated Association of Film Renters to persuade the Corporation, successfully, not to oppose the Bill. (Corporation Minutes, Parliamentary Bill Committee, 8 November 1915:156). In 1925 the Corporation received another representation from the Scottish branches of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association and the Kinematograph Renters Society lobbying against the Corporation recommending that a National Censor be appointed. After consulting with a great number of local organisations, including the YMCA, Glasgow's Women Citizens Association, the Corporation turned them down. (Corporation Minutes. Committee on Censorship of Moving Pictures, 25 January 1925, p. 589).
 - 26 Corporation Minutes, Parks Department Committee, 6 February 1918, p. 585.
 - 27 Corporation Minutes, General Finance, 10 March 1920, p. 1043.
 - 28 For a more detailed account, see Mark Swenerton, *Homes Fit for Heroes: The Politics of Early State Housing in Britain* (Heinemann Educational, 1981).
 - 29 Corporation General Minutes, 9 January 1919, pp. 397–399.
 - 30 Corporation Minutes, General Finance, 11 July 1919, p. 1684.
 - 31 It has not been possible to ascertain whether the Gaumont films were shown nationally in commercial cinemas as shorts or newsreels.
 - 32 Corporation Minutes, Education Authority, 5 June 1919, 'Cinematograph in Schools', Item VII, p. 58–59.
 - 33 Corporation Minutes, Education Authority, 9 November 1920, pp. 662–663.
 - 34 Corporation Minutes, Education Authority, Item 42, 'Cinematograph Performances for Juveniles', 22 April 1920, p. 42 and 2 Sept 1920, p. 396.
 - 35 Cleland's political affiliation has yet to be identified. It is assumed that he belonged to the Liberal Party.
 - 36 Ivan Butler, *'To Encourage the Art of Film'. The Story of the British Film Institute* (Robert Hale, 1971) pp. 21–23. Butler also notes that for several years after the arrival of sound in commercial cinemas, the general consensus at the BFI and among educationalists was that silent film was more practical for classroom purposes.
 - 37 Cleland chaired the Corporation's Committee on Censorship of Moving Pictures in 1925. In November 1923 the Education Authority had been approached by the BBC to assist in drawing up a programme of talks for school children. The Director and Chair of the Authority were appointed as representatives. In February 1924 the Glasgow Educational Consultative Committee agreed that 'the Wireless' would be 'a valuable adjunct to education' as long as it did not interfere with the school curriculum. It would also consider the question of the cost of installing wireless sets in schools, which it then did. Corporation Minutes, General Minutes, 'Wireless Talks on Educational Matters', 29 November 1923, p. 489 and 21 February 1924, p. 669.
 - 38 In total: 39,496 breakfasts, 116,130 dinners and 32,766 teas a year in addition to 47,721 partly subsidised dinners. Glasgow Corporation Minutes. Committee on Necessitous Children, 17 February 1921, p. 933.
 - 39 Corporation Minutes, Necessitous Children Committee, Item IV, 'Necessitous Children School Holiday Fund' 5 February 1924, p. 623.
 - 40 The *Daily Record and Mail* reported somewhat after the event that during the previous summer, supervisors at the Linlithgow Roman Catholic School had gone out dancing, coming home in the morning! 'Lying About School Children's Camp Allegation', *Daily Record and Mail*, Saturday 26 January 1929, p. 7.
 - 41 The *Glasgow Herald* for 8 March 1929 reported an objection by a Dr MacGillivray to the legality of the

- Fund and to the methods of recruiting teachers and staff for the camps as blackmail. The charge was stoutly resisted by the Reverend McQueen and not raised again.
- 42 The Education Department occasionally bailed the fund out. In August 1933 it paid some £480 towards a deficit that had accumulated. Corporation Minutes, School Welfare Sub-Committee, 28 August 1933, Item 4, p. 2423.
 - 43 Corporation Minutes, Special Committee on Necessitous Children's Holiday Camp Fund, Item IV, 30 March 1926, pp.14–15.
 - 44 The idea that better-off children should make charitable contributions towards the welfare of poor children may have been initiated by the NCHCF. On January 2 1929 the *Daily Record and Mail* announced that it was setting up a fund for the distressed children in mining areas of Scotland: 5909 shillings had been raised so far. On the same day the newspaper ran a short article entitled 'Tell the Kiddies' encouraging children to contribute to the miners' children fund for 'their less fortunate brothers and sisters'. The press was quick to perceive the holiday camps as a captive market. In June 1926 the Amalgamated Press Ltd. pledged 5,000 free copies of 'children's pictorial newspapers' for distribution in the camps that coming summer. Corporation Minutes, Special Committee on Necessitous Children, 17 June 1926, p. 220.
 - 45 Corporation Minutes, Special Committees, 'Activities on Behalf of the Fund', Item VII, 13 January 1927, pp. 580–581.
 - 46 *Glasgow Herald*, 9 March 1931.
 - 47 Shot List of *Sadness and Gladness*. Scottish Screen Archives, Ref. 0705
 - 48 Harold Shaw's *The Land Beyond the Sunset* (Edison, 1912) uses a New York slum kid's dream of joining a Fresh Air Fund camp as the basis of its wistful narrative.
 - 49 Grierson formally left the GPO Film Unit in 1937 to found an advisory organisation, Film Centre, before being appointed Film Commissioner to the Canadian Government in 1939.
 - 50 *The Evening News* 30 June 1934 and *The Jewish Echo* 12 October 1934.
 - 51 'The aim is to supply all primary and secondary schools with a silent projector and a film projector. All secondary schools actually now have them and a central stock of five sound projectors for secondary schools.' *Progress Reports on the Work of the Education Committee*, vol. 1, 1950–1952, p. 17.
 - 52 *The Film in the Classroom*, Corporation of Glasgow Education Department, 1933, 24 pp.
 - 53 *Cinema in Education*, 1925; *The Value of Film in the Teaching of History* (under the auspices of the Historical Association), 1931; *Report on an Experiment with Educational Films*, Erith Education Committee, 1932; *The Film in National Life*, 1932; London County Council Film Education Reports.
 - 54 *Souvenir Album of the Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry, Glasgow 1911*, T. and R. Annan and Sons, Glasgow, 1911. Consulted at the Canadian Centre for Architecture PH1978:010.
 - 55 See Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1929–1939*, Vol. 5, *Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s*; and Vol. 6, *Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930s*, George Allen and Unwin, both 1997.